

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 CIEP-01 OMB-01 CEA-01 TRSE-00 MC-02

ACDA-05 PM-03 H-01 L-02 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

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FM AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 513

OSAF WASHDC

DOD WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMMMBASSY THE HAGUE 1172

CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

AFSC ANDREES AFB

ASD WRIGHT PATTERSON AFB OH/YP

USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L COPENHAGEN 0589

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, DA

SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER COMMENTS ON THE F-104
REPLACEMENT

REF: COPENHAGEN 0577

SUMMARY: THE NEW DEFENSE MINISTER TOLD ME HE IS
CONFIDENT DENMARK WILL OPT FOR THE F-16 BUT ONLY AFTER
A LENGTHY PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE. IF THE CONSORTIUM BROKE
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UP, WHICH HE REGARDED AS UNLIKELY, HE THOUGHT BOTH NORWAY

AND DENMARK WOULD GO FOR THE F-16, ALTHOUGH HE INQUIRED WHETHER THE PRESENT PRICE WOULD STILL OBTAIN. END SUMMARY.

1. I CALLED ON THE DANISH MINISTER OF DEFENSE, ORLA MOLLER, FEB. 27 TO DISCUSS THE POSSIBLE F-16 PURCHASE. MOLLER COMES FROM THE RIGHT WING OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, IS VERY MUCH PRO-NATO, AND FEELS THAT DENMARK HAS A STRONG OBLIGATION TO DO HER PART IN SUPPORTING THE ALLIANCE. HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE U.S. CAN READILY BE DEDUCED FROM HIS COMMENT, "THANK GOD FOR GOOD FRIENDS IN THE UNITED STATES."

2. WHEN I QUESTIONED HIM ABOUT THE PROBABLE TIMETABLE FOR A DANISH DECISION ON THE PURCHASE OF AN AIR COMBAT FIGHTER, HE REPLIED THAT DEBATE IN THE PARLIAMENT WOULD BEGIN MARCH 11 AND, HE EXPECTED, WOULD LAST FROM FIVE TO EIGHT MONTHS. HE FELT SURE THAT THE FINAL DECISION WOULD BE IN FAVOR OF THE F-16, "THE ONLY POSSIBLE CHOICE." HE SAID THAT THE DEFENSE MINISTERS OF THE OTHER THREE CONSORTIUM COUNTRIES AGREE WITH HIM BUT ALL FOUR OF THEM HAVE SOFT PEDALLED THAT FACT FOR POLITICAL REASONS.

3. DURING THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE MOLLER PLANS TO DISCUSS ONLY THE BENEFITS OF THE AIRCRAFT AND NOT THE ISSUE OF A EUROPEAN AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY. HE ALSO PLANS TO STRESS STRONGLY THAT THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE TO THE PURCHASE OF AIRCRAFT IF DENMARK IS TO MEET HER NATO OBLIGATIONS AFTER 1982. HE HAS THUS FAR BEEN UNABLE TO DISCUSS THE AIRCRAFT PURCHASE WITH PRIME MINISTER ANKER JORGENSEN WHO, HE SAID, IS JUST NOT INTERESTED IN THE SUBJECT. (I PLAN TO RAISE THE AIRCRAFT ISSUE WITH JORGENSEN WHEN I CALL ON HIM.)

4. IN REPLY TO MY QUESTION, MOLLER SAID THAT HE DID NOT EXPECT ANYTHING TO HAPPEN AT THE MEETING OF THE DEFENSE MINISTERS IN EARLY MARCH. HE FELT THERE WAS VERY LITTLE DANGER OF THE CONSORTIUM BREAKING UP, BUT SHOULD THIS HAPPEN, NORWAY AND DENMARK WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY GO FOR THE F-16. IN THAT CONNECTION HE WANTED TO KNOW WHETHER THE SAME PRICE WOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR THE TWO COUNTRIES. I SAID THAT I WOULD INQUIRE. (I WOULD APPRECIATE

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CIATE ADVICE ON THIS POINT WHICH I CAN PASS TO MOLLER.)

5. MOLLER DID NOT FEEL THAT RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY LABOR LEADER THOMAS NIELSEN THAT DENMARK SHOULD PURCHASE THE VIGGEN SHOULD BE TAKEN TOO SERIOUSLY; NIELSEN'S PRIMARY INTEREST IS IN JOBS, NOT IN AIRCRAFT. HE SHOULD NOT, IN FACT, BE EXPRESSING ANY OPINIONS.

6. WHEN I ASKED IF THERE WERE ANYTHING WE COULD DO TO HELP, MOLLER REPLIED THAT EXCEPT FOR ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT BY THE FOUR, THERE WAS NOTHING AT PRESENT.

7. COMMENT: MOLLER SEEMS CONVINCED THAT THE F-16 IS THE ONLY CHOICE FOR DENMARK AND THAT PARLIAMENT WILL EVENTUALLY AGREE TO ITS PURCHASE. THE ESTIMATED FIVE TO EIGHT MONTH DELAY IN REACHING THE DECISION, HOWEVER, IS OBVIOUSLY GOING TO CREATE PROBLEMS WHICH MOLLER SEEMS TO DISREGARD. I DO NOT SHARE HIS VIEW THAT NIELSEN'S PREFERENCE FOR THE VIGGEN SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY. AS STATED IN COPENHAGEN 0577, I FEEL THAT THE COMBINATION OF HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE INDIRECT OFFSETS OFFERED BY SWEDEN ARE LIKELY TO WEIGH HEAVILY IN PUBLIC OPINION AND IN THE PARLIAMENT. LIKEWISE, THE UNSTABLE POLITICAL SITUATION HERE DOES NOT OFFER A VERY GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR MOLLER TO STEER THE DEBATE OR TO HURRY A DECISION.
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